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Summary Report

NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC
INTERPRETATION CENTER

POSSIBLE SLBM TEST TOWER AT SEVERODVINSK SHIPYARD 402, USSR (TSR)

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POSSIBLE SLBM TEST TOWER AT SEVERODVINSK SHIPYARD 402, USSR (TSR)

(TSR) Analysis of activity involving a possible missile tube test tower at Severodvinsk Shipyard 402 [] and construction at Nenoksa Naval Missile Test Center (NMTC; []) as seen on imagery acquired since 1971 indicates that a correlation can be drawn between activity at the tower and the development of specific submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) weapons systems.

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(TSR) The original test tower, constructed between August 1970 and March 1971, was probably designed for the testing of a missile launch tube and/or for the training of personnel involved in handling the components and equipment associated with the SS-N-8 SLBM. The tower consisted of an 8.0-meter square base [] with a 4.0-meter-diameter cylinder extending above the base. The inner tube diameter of the cylinder [] including lockdown ring [] The dimensions are the same as those of SS-N-8 missile tubes. The first Delta-class SSBN nuclear powered fleet ballistic missile submarine was launched in December 1971, approximately nine months after the completion of the test tower.

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(TSR) Between August 1972 and March 1973 activity was again seen at the possible SLBM test tower. This activity consisted of removing the 4.0-meter-diameter cylinder and the launch tube cap [] and their subsequent replacement. This modification of the tower coincided with and is probably related to the development of the SS-NX-17. Other activity supporting this assumption includes the modification of launch facility B at Nenoksa NMTC between 1973 and 1975 and the subsequent flight testing of the SS-NX-17, beginning in May 1975. The platform for the SS-NX-17 system, a modified Y-class SSBN, was launched in June or July 1976, approximately one year after flight testing of the SS-NX-17 was begun.

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(TSR) From June 1973 to May 1975 activity was again observed at the test tower. Construction centered around the base of the tower and on the utility lines leading to the old SLBM tower (Figure 2). Although the exact nature of the work is not known, it is felt that this construction activity was associated with development of the SS-NX-18. Again the conclusion is based on an apparent sequence of activities. The construction of the tower coincided with the construction of launch facility C at Nenoksa NMTC and preceded the initial launch of the SS-NX-18 in October 1975.

Construction of the Delta III SSBN began in January or February 1974, with the first unit being launched in January 1976, some three months after the SS-NX-18 flight test program began.

(TSR) In November 1975 construction of a new tower at Severodvinsk was begun and by September 1976 it appeared to be externally complete. [] showed a [] cylindrical extension with a 5.0-meter diameter opening positioned over the 4.0-meter opening in the base. Curved segments for extending the height of the base [] and deck plates were also observed near the tower. []

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[redacted] the tower appeared to be complete and a hinged cap had
been placed over the opening [redacted]

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(TSR) During 1975 construction also was begun on a new launch facility (launch facility D) at Nenoksa and on a probable new SSBN at Severodvinsk. Also, a new SLBM is currently undergoing popup testing at Balaklava Missile Test Center [redacted]

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(TSR) If the developmental concepts, as previously discussed for the SS-NX-17 and SS-NX-18, are valid and are applicable to the current activities at Nenoksa, Severodvinsk, and Balaklava, then it would suggest that preparations are once again underway for flight testing of a new SLBM. It appears that launch facility D could be ready for the flight test program in late 1978 or early 1979. If a new submarine is under construction at Severodvinsk, if it is related to the SLBM test program at launch facility D, and if it follows launch patterns of the initial platforms for the SS-NX-17 and SS-NX-18, then it is possible that the new submarine will be launched within three months to a year after the beginning of the new SLBM flight test program.

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